

## FINANCIAL GOSSIP

# Tobacco Stand Proves Lucrative Aid to Blind

By HENRY J. BECHTOLD  
NEW YORK (UPI)—The tobacco stand has proved the answer to one of our more serious unemployment problems—the blind.

The small stands, which specialize in cigars, cigarettes, magazines, soft drinks and food, have enabled more than 2,000 blind people to lead virtually normal lives and to be independent.

These people have become taxpayers, good businessmen and women, and good citizens in the proudest sense of our American heritage of independence, according to President James P. Richards of the Tobacco Institute.

The efforts of the 2,111 blind tobacco stand operators in fiscal 1959 produced total net income of \$6,578,151. Average earnings were \$3,354, but they ran much higher in many areas—as much as \$6,038 on average in the District of Columbia.

And this enterprise is growing steadily. In 1950 approxi-

mately 1,400 tobacco stands and corresponding agencies in were operated by the blind in each state help build and federal, state, municipal and maintain such businesses. private buildings, according to The Randolph-Shepard Act of figures of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. 1936 provides for free space in federal buildings, together with funds for equipment and initial stock.

By 1955 the number of stands had increased to 1,560 from two to six weeks, and is and at the end of fiscal 1959 it reached 1,982. Some stands financed through the vocational rehabilitation act.

California by far has the most blind tobacco stand operators, 191, followed surprisingly by Alabama with 119. New York is third with 116; Texas 114; North Carolina 93; Ohio 92; Pennsylvania 91; Tennessee 88; Florida 86; and Louisiana 82. The American Assn. of Workers for the Blind, Washington, has added considerably to the prestige and development of the blind business people in recent years. It now is preparing for its annual national convention in Miami Beach, Aug. 28-Sept. 2.

Following the District of Columbia in the highest average net proceeds per operator are Maryland \$5,088; California \$4,968; Oregon \$4,704; Pennsylvania \$4,608; and Colorado \$4,464.

Training of the tobacco stand operators varies from state to state but has "improved tremendously" in the past decade, according to Louis H. Rives Jr., chief of the division of special services to the blind in the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation.

The rehabilitation service

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